

WASHINGTON, DC (September 2, 2009) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-IL, released the following statement in response to the State Department’s decision to grant an extension to Blackwater for operations in Iraq. Rep. Schakowsky has been critical of using private contractors to provide armed security services for U.S. government personnel.

“Every day that Blackwater operates in Iraq as a contractor for the United States our military and diplomatic objectives are put at serious risk. While I understand the need to protect United States personnel serving in Iraq, I do not believe that continuing to award contracts to Blackwater is in the best interest of our men and women overseas. Given the company’s history of massive abuses and misconduct, I believe it is inappropriate for the United States government to continue doing business with this firm. Further, the Iraqi government has denied Blackwater’s permission to operate in their country because of the company’s history of gross misconduct. In addition, the fact that the United States has to rely on private security companies for air support to protect our personnel is a concern in and of itself. It is unacceptable that the United States’ does not have the capacity to conduct these sensitive operations.”